

Message from PAS director Chris Abani



And just like that, a new quarter is upon us. Time is one of the primordial forces that we must contend with in life, and whether you think of time as seasonal, or cyclical, or strictly linear—or, as the Igbo and Yoruba do, as an entanglement—

it is still the prime mover. So, as we move further into 2022, in Western traditions and in the sense of the academic calendar, it is wise to account for our time so far and project a hopeful future.

For a fiction writer (such as I am), a complication is a gift because it forces us past binary positions into triangulations and more; in other words, a complication is what drives narrative forward. As we at PAS evolve, we have embraced complications and (dis)entanglements and used them to chart our course forward.

Entanglement is the key theme for this new phase we at PAS are entering. I am thinking about the idea of entanglement less in the quantum way that we do in West African philosophical thought but more in terms of involvement and complication. We have slowly been figuring out all the projects and lines of thought and action that PAS has invested in—become involved in, if you like—and asking hard questions about what should naturally be

phased out, what has come to an end by itself, and what involvements we should consider for the future—a slow process, as you can imagine, not to mention a delicate one.

Then there is the matter of complication. In standard usage, complications are often seen as problems, but for a fiction writer a complication is a gift because it forces us past binary positions into triangulations and more; in other words, a complication is what drives narrative forward. As we at PAS evolve, we have embraced complications and (dis)entanglements and used them to chart our course forward.

This has led us to convene a multicampus, multidisciplinary transition committee that will help us expand our remit in some areas, limit or refocus in others, and help us push through to new spaces. In 2020–21 we made great strides in our programming and in adjusting the format of things to account for COVID-19 and distancing. What we initially might have encountered as a limit has become a gift. Our curated series of online talks continues to grow in content and following and has allowed us to reach new audiences. And as we seemed to emerge from the limitations of the pandemic, we began holding out hope for a return to in-person events. Then the Omicron variant threw us a curve ball that we had to track for an angle of swing, keeping the richness of the virtual in a new hybrid entanglement.

In any case, our next steps hold the hope of a major spring symposium (in person) and events featuring Stanford English professor Ato Quayson and Washington University historian Jean Allman, a new series of curated talks and videos (including one on cuisine as postcolonial discourse), and many more engagements.

I offer gratitude to our staff, affiliates, the entire community of Northwestern, and our wider community for your continued support. Stay with us as we chart a path through the entanglement to continue to be present to and for each other.

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Workshop examines security force assistance programs

By Will Reno



Last October, against the backdrop of the dissolution of Afghanistan’s US-trained armed forces as the Taliban advanced to Kabul, PAS and the political science department convened a workshop examining the security force assistance

(SFA) programs of the US and its NATO partners—programs that have cost almost \$400 billion over the past 20 years, with a considerable portion directed toward SFA in Africa. The workshop’s 16 participants included academic experts, civilian policy makers involved in US-Africa relations, and members of the US military, including special operations personnel and other soldiers who plan and participate in SFA operations in Africa.

Participants explored how the US and its NATO partners do SFA, particularly in states with a troubled history of managing capable armed forces in their midst. Conditions leading to last fall’s events in Afghanistan also exist in Somalia and across the Sahel, all major recipients of US and NATO partner SFA programs. More broadly, SFA has become a focal point of US relations with many African countries, particularly as US attention after 9/11 shifted to counterterrorism. SFA is shifting again, now toward competing with China, Russia, and other countries for influence in Africa.

In open-ended discussions on these broad SFA themes, the workshop touched on some specific questions: What is the role of SFA as the US enters strategic competition? How are SFA providers operating in states where weak institutions and governments fear that SFA “successes” will overthrow them instead of fight insurgents? How have SFA recipients adjusted to strategic competition among SFA providers that now include China, Russia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and

Turkey? What is the impact of the changing strategic environment on the relationship between human rights and ground realities in many African states? What is the role of technologies related to surveillance, control of populations, and hybrid warfare in the politics of SFA? What post-cold-war lessons and warnings apply to research on the politics of SFA in fragile states? Is there a better way of doing SFA at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels?

“Houston, we have a problem” is one way to sum up the discussion and debates on the realities of SFA politics in Africa. One military planner stunned participants with a PowerPoint presentation that outlined a three-year process—whose complexity would impress a corporate tax lawyer—to produce a SFA mission. A lot of that complexity is oversight to attend to human rights issues and civilian supremacy over US military programs. How sustainable is this process when African governments can easily turn to China or Russia or others to get weapons and training? Would competing with those SFA providers inevitably test US commitments to values like human rights and the rule of law? Participants, including Special Force operators, expressed concerns that US political leaders rely too heavily on operators to implement SFA programs. That may increase efficiency, but at the risk of evading public oversight. Everyone agreed that US planners and providers tend to have at best a cursory grasp of key elements of local political contexts.

Workshop participants will be invited to contribute to the Department of Defense-funded Minerva Defense Education and Civilian University Research Partnership project “Foreign Military Training: Building Effective Armed Forces in Weak States,” a collaboration between Northwestern University and the US Air Force Academy.

Will Reno is chair of the Department of Political Science and a former director of PAS.

Funding opportunities for Africanist students

African Research Leadership Awards (up to \$4,000 each) support undergraduate students who wish to develop and lead research projects related to African studies. Projects may build on the African studies adjunct major's research/immersion experience or extend research done in a past course. Open to all first- through third-year undergraduates; African studies adjunct majors and minors receive preference. Applications are due April 15.

Morris Goodman Language Awards (up to \$3,000 each) help enable graduate students to study African languages taught outside Northwestern. Students may learn from a qualified Chicago-area tutor or travel for language study through programs such as Fulbright-Hays Language Group Projects Abroad and the Summer Cooperative African Language Institute. The grant normally supports 60 hours of tutoring; for other types of study, students must provide a syllabus, evaluations, and other course information. Applications accepted on a rolling basis.

Guyer-Virman Awards (\$200–\$400 each) help enable graduate students in their third year or beyond to travel to archives or participate in conferences. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

The **John Hunwick Research Fund** supports faculty and graduate student research on Islam in Africa. Award recipients may use the funds to travel to archives, fieldwork sites, or conferences or to organize a campus visit or lecture by a scholar of Islam and Africa. Applications accepted on a rolling basis.

Hans E. Panofsky Predissertation Research Awards (up to \$3,000 each) help enable graduate students to evaluate research opportunities, conduct predissertation fieldwork, arrange institutional affiliation, or conduct archival research in Africa. Doctoral students who have completed their second year of coursework and will seek candidacy the following year are eligible to apply. Students who completed a master's degree before studying at Northwestern and are ready for predissertation

fieldwork after their first year may also apply. Applicants must be enrolled at Northwestern both when they apply and in the quarter immediately following their research trips. Participants in Afrisem and other PAS activities receive preference. Applicants must concurrently seek predissertation research support from other sources. Applications are due April 2.

PAS Travel Awards (up to \$400 each) are offered to graduate and undergraduate students to help defray the costs of participating in an Africa-related conference, usually to present a paper. Students must apply in advance of the conference, but funds may be released at a later date. Applications accepted on a rolling basis.

Complete application instructions for all awards can be found at africanstudies.northwestern.edu/research/funding/index.html. Questions? Send them by email to african-studies@northwestern.edu or call 847-491-7323.

Wana Udobang offers new video series

Nigerian writer and performer Wana Udobang curated a three-part video series in January and February featuring speakers on the theme “decolonizing the tongue.” The talks focused on reclamation, identity, history, place, discovery, border erasure, and generational dialogue through the lens of food. Speakers included Kenyan American food writer, researcher, and photographer Neema Syovata; Nigerian food explorer, culinary anthropologist, and food historian Ozoz Sokoh (aka “the Kitchen Butterfly”); and Nigerian dietician and founder of the popular blogsite 1Q Food Platter Iquo Ukoh. The series is now available on the PAS YouTube channel.



VIEWPOINT

The highest bidder won Gambia's presidential elections

By Lamin Keita

Gambian president Adama Barrow won a second term in the December 4, 2021, presidential election. According to results released by the chair of the Independent Electoral Commission late on December 5, Barrow's National People's Party (NPP) received 457,519 votes—or 53 percent—of the 859,567 total votes cast. The two leading opposition candidates, who polled at 27.7 percent and 11 percent, respectively, immediately disputed the results, claiming irregularities.

Gambia's electoral results reflect a broader trend in African elections in which incumbent presidents win more than Barrow's 53 percent of the overall vote. Looking at results like these, it is easy to see why African elections are often critiqued as expensive exercises in political theater, where the highest bidder takes all, denying any real hope that voters will see any substantive change in leadership. However, elections can have significant positive and negative effects, whether or not they result in a new president.

By way of explanation, I will depart from anecdotes and depend on data and science to theorize on what helps an incumbent president succeed and why the opponents fail. As I discussed in "President Barrow Is a Corporatist-Strategist," my 2021 interview in *The Standard*, Barrow and his NPP political allies moved expeditiously to respond to challenges. Their political ideology advocates a complex system of close-knit corporate groups in business, labor, the security forces, and grassroots associations that hold common interests.

This corporatist-strategic approach helped Barrow leverage and exploit the country's endemic poverty. For example, he raised the hopes of average Gambians—who can barely afford two square meals a day—by promising to raise wages to 3,000 dalasi (US\$57.31) per month and provide ambulances, milling machines, rice, and other foodstuffs. Meanwhile, he deflected the opposition's criticism by co-opting more moderate groups from among both minority and majority ethnic groups. The strategic procedures started shortly before voter registration and continued throughout the electoral campaign. Thus, Barrow exploited



Gambian voters bound for the polls in Banjul

infrastructural powers that allowed him to be involved in massive voter registration efforts as well as in mobilizing the vote, especially in opposition strongholds. In addition, his ability to dole out new cars to his supporters and the security force demonstrated his embeddedness within the population.

The outcome of the election demonstrates why journalists and researchers must focus on the entire electoral process—from voter registration to vote tallying. We need to pay more attention to how elections drive controversy and change the focus of government policy even in situations where the opposition never wins. A free and fair electoral process does not stop at counting the votes; other factors worthy of scrutiny include the incumbent's unparalleled access to the state media and his misuse or misappropriation of state vehicles and government patronage resources. This effectively means that the opposition parties are fighting with one hand tied behind their backs. This explains why the crowds at events sponsored by the United Democratic Party and other major opposition groups do not translate into equitable votes. What went wrong?

African elections are confusing, and presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Uganda have likely played out like Gambia's. The more popular the opposition leaders become, the more tricks and complex electoral maneuvers governments will deploy. It may be said that if electoral manipulation were a sport, the marble system—Gambia's archaic voting method—would be the Olympic champion.

Nevertheless, even though Barrow won reelection, the electoral engagement can still profoundly affect Barrow's policy. Barrow must understand that staying in power is far easier and cheaper if he gets some votes legitimately. At the same time, the opposition parties need to bolster their political organization, means of communication, and embeddedness in the communities—assets that are essential in any democratic multiparty system for boosting legitimacy and chances of success. If future elections are conducted under the climate of genuine democratic process, then Gambia should set a stage that replicates an electoral process that is transparent, free, and fair.

Lamin Keita, a political science graduate student whose dissertation research focuses on the local politics of radicalization in West Africa, served as an election observer in last year's Gambian presidential election.



Lamin Keita (left) and Essa Faal, the former lead counsel of the Gambia's Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission who ran unsuccessfully as an independent candidate in the 2021 Gambian presidential race

ASA convened virtually in 2021

Several PAS faculty, Herskovits Library staff, and graduate students participated in last November's virtual African Studies Association annual meeting whose theme was "Re-centering Africa: Resistance and Renewal in a World Beyond COVID-19." **Gerard Akindes** (Northwestern University Qatar) contributed to the roundtable on "Digital Media and African Sports"; **Adia Benton** (anthropology) participated in the discussion of Lisa Richey's book *Batman Saves the Congo: How Celebrities Disrupt the Politics of Development*; history graduate student **Mitch Edwards** presented the paper "A Troubling Presence: 'Sudanese Refugees' in Late Colonial and Early Postcolonial Uganda, 1955–67"; **Sean Hanretta** (history) was a discussant on the panel "Global Intellectual History"; **Florence Mugambi** (Herskovits Library) chaired the roundtable "Unpacking the Libraries: How, What, Who," sponsored by the Africana Librarians Council; and history graduate student **Andrea Rosengarten** presented the paper "Separating the 'Coloured' from the 'Natives'?": Urban Planning and Racial Mobilities in Apartheid Namibia, 1950–80s" and cochaired the panel "Making Home in the City: Segregation, Mobilities, and Urban Space in 20th-Century Africa."

PAS welcomes four new PhD students

Xena Amro (comparative literary studies) has interests in travelogues, global modernism, translation studies, modern Arabic literature, and 20th-century European novels. She received a BA in English literature from the Lebanese American University and an MA in English literature from the American University of Beirut. **Olabanke Oyinkansola Goriola** (performance studies) is a performer and choreographer from Nigeria who earned a BA in theatre arts and an MA in the anthropology of dance in the University of Ibadan Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Program. Her research interests include discourses related to African religion, ritual, and spirituality; music and dance in Africa and the diaspora; gender studies, race, migration, and representation; and minoritarian studies. **Brandon Greenhouse** (theatre) studies the relationship of African oral storytelling traditions to contemporary African American theatre. **Aaron Wilford** is pursuing his PhD in African history.

A passion for manuscripts: An interview with Ragy Mikhaeel

By Rebecca Shereikis

Ragy Mikhaeel, associate professor of instruction in Middle East and North African languages, is known at Northwestern as a dynamic teacher. A native of Cairo, Mikhaeel worked as a journalist for *Al Ahrām* weekly (Cairo) and taught Arabic at Cornell University and other colleges before joining Northwestern's faculty in 2008. He has developed a new course on media Arabic, a language and culture course focusing on Cairo, and courses on reading classical Arabic texts such as *The One Thousand and One Nights*. He received the Excellence in Foreign Language Teaching Award from Northwestern's Council of Language Instruction in 2015 and is the author of *Learn Arabic the Fast and Fun Way* (Barron's, 2009).

Through association with the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA) as a faculty affiliate, Mikhaeel has gradually developed another area of interest: exploring the handwritten manuscript traditions of the Arabic-speaking world. This interest arose from his encounter with the collection of Arabic manuscripts from West Africa housed in the Herskovits Library of African Studies (see <https://libguides.northwestern.edu/arabic-manuscripts>).

I interviewed Mikhaeel about his passion for manuscripts, his involvement with ISITA, and why he thinks it is important to integrate materials from West Africa into Arabic language teaching at Northwestern.

How were you introduced to the West African Arabic manuscript collection at Northwestern?

It all started in 2010 when Ruediger Seesemann [then associate professor of religious studies at Northwestern] took me to the Herskovits Library to see the manuscripts. He assigned me a research task for an ISITA project dealing with the writings of scholars of the Tijaniyya sufi order, of which there are many in this collection. I became fascinated with the field of manuscript studies and fell in love with it as an art form. There's something very pure and childlike within me that drew me to this specific art. I had loved calligraphy ever since I was a child, and especially the Qur'anic suras that I would see framed on the walls of my friends' houses in Cairo.

We would challenge each other to identify the verse. While teaching Arabic at Cornell, I helped some professors decipher handwritten Arabic manuscripts that lacked diacritical dots and discovered I had a gift for this. Sometimes I would stay up all night with a dictionary and I even uncovered mistakes made by the scribe in a particular historical manuscript.

My connection to the manuscript collection at Northwestern grew deeper once I saw a copy of the "Huqqa al Bukaa'" and began to translate it and develop pedagogical materials based upon it. [Interviewer's note: "Huqqa al Bukaa'" ("Should They Be Mourned?") is a poem composed circa 1883–84 by Amadu Bamba Mbacké (1853–1927), one of West Africa's most important Muslim leaders and intellectuals. A copy of the poem is in the Herskovits collection.]

It wasn't just the manuscript itself, but the fact that I could watch YouTube videos of this poem being recited in contemporary contexts. They were reviving the spirit of the manuscript! I realized that in West Africa these manuscripts are not museum pieces. They are part of peoples' lives; they can improve peoples' lives. People pray and become better people when they interact with this poem.

It all came together for me when I attended the Introduction to Islamic Codicology Short Course at Stanford University in 2015 [with support from the John Hunwick Research Fund]. This intensive course, organized by the Islamic Manuscript Association, was taught by Jan Just Witkam of Leiden University, one of the world's foremost authorities on Islamic codicology. I was so inspired by the course that I would have started a PhD in manuscript codicology right then! But I decided to focus instead on bringing my enthusiasm for manuscripts back to Northwestern and introducing students to this field.

The Stanford course, which you also attended, was a turning point in my interest in codicology. You truly encouraged and supported me from the beginning. Through ISITA, I also met historian Mauro Nobili of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who has helped in steering me toward the important academic works in the field.

Tell us about your pilot project using the poem from the Herskovits collection “Huqqa al Bukaa!”

I wanted to develop a pedagogical tool for teaching advanced Arabic using West African manuscripts from the Herskovits collection. Reading a manuscript has an artistic aspect, but students rarely get a pragmatic, hands-on approach with manuscripts in Arabic classrooms. I applied for, and was granted, a Provost’s Fellowship for Digital Learning in 2017–2018 to develop a prototype using the “Huqqa al Bukaa!”

I worked with the University’s Media and Technology Innovation unit on the technical aspects. We used a light-board to show an image of the text that I could write on and annotate while I walked students through decoding the script, grammatical concepts, and vocabulary. I have videotaped six pilot lessons, entirely in Arabic, which may be viewed online at [youtube.com/watch?v=teVyKG6P7I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teVyKG6P7I). I have recorded more material that is not yet available online.

What are your plans for future work with manuscripts?

I would like to expand the pilot into a full course that I can offer online or as a hybrid class to students at Northwestern and other institutions. Eventually I want to design a course that includes manuscripts from all regions of the Arabic-speaking world. But for now, I insist on working with the materials from West Africa in the Northwestern collection because the Arabic literature from this region has been marginalized, especially in Arabic language teaching. We need to encourage students to investigate this human heritage and not ignore it. The pilot project also motivated me to create a workbook, which is still in progress.



Mikhaeel holding a lawh, or writing board, from West Africa

For the time being I’m just trying to support students interested in reading Arabic manuscripts the fastest way I can. This academic year, I became the faculty adviser for the interdisciplinary Arabic Literature Reading Group, based in the Middle East and North African studies department. It is brand-new, so I am not imposing my ideas on the graduate students. They take the lead. We are trying to create a community in which graduate students can exchange research ideas and help and inspire one another. Some of these students are interested in reading Arabic manuscripts. Eventually I’d like to create an Arabic manuscript group that meets regularly to keep interest going until we have established a formal course.

ISITA Dialogues videos available

Videos of the five talks in the February–June 2021 ISITA Dialogues series are now available on ISITA’s YouTube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8Uh4PiEzozmK_5QwpcLQAw/videos.

Talks in the series include “Africanization: The Bridge to Edward Blyden’s Final Intellectual Transformation” by Harry Nii Koney Odamtten (Santa Clara University); “Black Literary Islam in the Caribbean: Autobiographical Writings of Enslaved Sufi West Africans in 19th-Century Jamaica and Sufi Poetry in Guyana” by Aliyah Khan

(University of Michigan); “The Khoja of Tanzania: Discontinuities of a Postcolonial Religious Identity” by Iqbal Akhtar (Florida International University); “Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel: Local Politics and Rebel Groups” by Alexander Thurston (University of Cincinnati); “Ajami Archives of Muslim Africa: Their Significance in African Studies” by Fallou Ngom (Boston University); and “Mosques, Culture Clubs, and Embodied Ritual Debates: Re-making Islam in a New African Diaspora” by Michelle Johnson (Bucknell University).



Taking Sokoto studies in new directions

By Paul Naylor

In 1804, Usman dan Fodio, along with his younger brother Abdullahi and Abdullahi's son Muhammad Bello (whom I call the Fodiawa), led a religious war against the Hausa kingdoms, a series of city states that had held political and religious authority in the region for many hundreds of years. To support their movement, these three men wrote over 200 books, pamphlets, and propaganda documents, in Arabic as well as Fulfulde and Hausa, explaining their reasons for the jihad, giving an account of its history, and outlining their visions for the Muslim state that would govern the vast area of territory they now controlled.

The historiography of Sokoto, or “Sokoto studies,” that was constructed out of this mass of archival material has always been closely intertwined with the politics of the present day. In a pattern that was repeated in other parts of Africa during the colonial period, descendants of the Fodiawa worked closely with the British to develop a historical narrative of their state, and thus cement their important role in the native administration. Soon after their conquest of Sokoto in 1903, the British colonial authorities commissioned Wazir Muhammad al-Bukhari to write a history of the territories now under their control. In the 1960s, al-Bukhari's grandson, Waziri Junaidu, hosted Murray Last, author of *The Sokoto Caliphate*—which remains the authoritative historical study of Sokoto—who completed much of his dissertation work in the Waziri's private library.

Last was writing at a time in which the future of Nigeria seemed to be in the hands of northern elites. Sir Ahmadu Bello, great-grandson of Muhammad Bello, formed Nigeria's first postindependence government. And it was Bello who, through his Northern History Research Scheme, transferred the Fodiawa's manuscripts from private hands into new national archive collections such as the University of Ibadan. The “Sokoto Caliphate,” a phrase seemingly coined by Last himself, was the ideal precolonial history for a new, post-colonial nation led by northern traditional elites. However, the assassination of Ahmadu Bello in 1966 and the descent of the country into civil war put paid to these ideas. Today,

Sokoto—and the role of traditional leaders in domestic politics more generally—

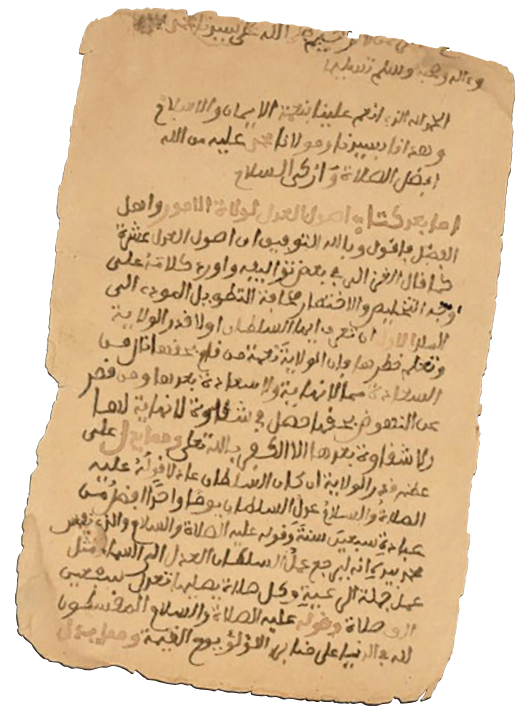
continues to

be highly relevant and contentious in

Nigerian politics. And the 200-year anniversary of the jihad was marked alternately with celebration and with deep reflection.

So why write another book about Sokoto? My own book project *From Rebels to Rulers: Writing Legitimacy in the Early Sokoto State* does not try to repackage the Fodiawa's writings for a different Nigerian present. Conversely, the book engages in a close, analytical approach that returns these texts back to their own historical and cultural context while asking basic questions hitherto largely ignored: For whom were the Fodiawa writing? Why did they write so much? Did their ideas and visions change over time? Questions that allow us to approach these documents with new eyes. Writing—and, specifically, writing in Arabic—was an essential vehicle for legitimizing political and intellectual projects. Therefore, while these texts are unreliable as “historical” sources, they grant us an excellent understanding of what legitimacy meant in the 19th-century Sahel and how it could be gained and lost.

The book first recreates the discursive space of the Sahelian intellectual elites who were writing, reading, and discussing these texts, and proposes various interlinked elements that formed a stable concept of “legitimacy” in this specific social and cultural context. But as the Fodiawa moved from a small band of rebels to rulers of a vast territorial empire, their actions and the arguments they used to justify them necessarily had to change. From the run-up to the jihad of 1804 until 1821, when Muhammad Bello's control of Sokoto was assured, the Fodiawa moved from what I call a discourse of dissent against the Hausa rulers to a discourse



Left: Page from the Foundations of Justice for Legal Guardians, Governors, Princes, Meritorious Rulers, and Kings (Usman dan Fodio) manuscript

of moderation, emphasizing adherence to the Fodiawa's imperfect rule. This discursive shift explains both the bitter disagreements between factions of Sokoto elite and the durability of the Sokoto state. It also demonstrates that the explosion of texts in the early 19th-century Sahel did not signify a powerful, confident new elite but the reverse: mounting questions and disagreements that had to be addressed through extensive debate.

After the death of Muhammad Bello in 1837, the 30-year boom in literary production came to an abrupt end. It was not that the link between writing and political legitimation was broken. Rather, it was that the performative power of the Sokoto state now lay in preserving, copying, and synthesizing the writings of the state's founders, not creating new texts. This role—telling a history that benefits current political elites—has remained essentially the same, even after over a hundred years of engagement by scholars. To hit this point home, this year, Premium Times, a major Nigerian media and publishing house, released a new edition of *The Sokoto Caliphate*, 54 years after its first publication, for use in schools and higher education.

From Rebels to Rulers provides a detailed account of how one religious movement gained and retained its legitimacy, but also sheds light on the construction of legitimacy in Muslim societies more generally. In this way, I hope to reorient Sokoto studies, which has become somewhat entrenched in Nigerian domestic concerns, into wider conversation with the series of religious movements that shook the 19th-century Sahel from Futa Toro and Futa Jallon, the Laamu Diina or Caliphate of Hamdallahi in Masina, to the Mahdiyya of Muhammad Ahmad in the Sudan, with whom Sokoto's leaders were in regular contact.

Paul Naylor is a visiting ISITA scholar and a cataloger of West African manuscripts at the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library at Saint John's University in Minnesota.



"Africa, Globalization, and the Muslim Worlds" participants

Journal publishes papers from 2019 conference

A new special issue of the open-access journal *Religions* features articles from the 2019 conference "Africa, Globalization, and the Muslim Worlds," convened by ISITA and Harvard Divinity School.

Guest edited by conference co-convenors Zekeria Ahmed Salem (ISITA) and Ousmane Kane (Harvard), the issue includes articles by Cheikh E. Abdoulaye Niang ("Globalization and Missionary Ambition in West African Islam: The Fayda after Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse"), Mansour Kedidir ("Connections of Magrebin and Sub-Saharan Intellectuals: Trajectories and Representations"), Ayodeji Ogunnaike ("Bilad al-Brazil: The Importance of West African Scholars in Brazilian Islamic Education and Practice in Historical and Contemporary Perspective"), Steve Howard ("On the Path of the Prophet in Unsettled Times: Sudan's Republican Brotherhood Looks Abroad"), Rhea Rahman ("Racializing the Good Muslim: Muslim White Adjacency and Black Muslim Activism in South Africa"), Ezgi Guner ("NGOization of Islamic Education: The Post-Coup Turkish State and Sufi Orders in Africa South of the Sahara"), and Youssef Carter ("Fisibilillah: Labor as Learning on the Sufi Path"). Later additions to the issue will include Ahmed Salem's "Global Shinqit: Mauritania's Islamic Discursive Tradition and the Making of Transnational Religious Authority, 18th–21st Centuries," a reworking of his conference keynote address. The issue can be read online at https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/Muslim_Worlds#info.

Pier Larson archive gifted to Northwestern



Northwestern University Libraries are pleased to announce the receipt of the archive of renowned historian Pier Larson (1961–2020). The papers that chronicle Larson’s extensive scholarly career will reside in the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies.

Larson, a Johns Hopkins University professor since 1998, specialized in the history of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean islands, focusing on the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. His teaching and research centered on the history of East and southern Africa, Madagascar, and the Francophone islands of the Western Indian Ocean; slavery, literacy, and religion; and the history of the French empire.

Esmeralda Kale, the George and Mary LeCron Foster Curator of the Herskovits Library, states that the archive’s depth makes it invaluable to the contemporary study of Africa: “Dr. Larson’s inventories, photographs, and transcriptions are an extremely rich resource for anyone doing research in this area.”

The voluminous archive includes the Larson Fieldwork Collection (materials that supported his 1992 dissertation and his first book, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement: Becoming Merina in Highland Madagascar, 1770–1822*); research notes, lecture notes and class syllabi; three unpublished manuscripts he was working on at the time of his death, including a series of articles that were the beginnings of a book on the 17th-century French colony of Fort Dauphin in Madagascar. (One of these articles, “Play and Possession: Sex, Marriage, and Household at Fort Dauphin

“Having access to Larson’s enormous collection will allow scholars to carry forward the study of a region whose complex interlinkages are only beginning to be understood.”

— Sara Berry, Johns Hopkins University professor emerita

(Madagascar), c. 1660s,” will appear in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* in November). Larson’s files of photographs include primary source materials (in some cases the only digital copies), African art from museum collections, topography, landscapes, historic structures, and people, all carefully cataloged.

Larson had worked extensively with the Herskovits Library in the course of his work, making him quite familiar with its holdings and its place in the scholarship of the field. Larson’s wife, Michelle Boardman, believed this made the Herskovits the logical home of his papers. “The Herskovits is one of the most comprehensive collections of African material worldwide and is a place Pier knew well,” she said. “His work can now be easily found and used by the widest possible scholarly community.”

Boardman, along with Norge Larson and Arlene Libby, Pier’s brother and sister-in-law, have provided a generous gift to process the collection and make the material accessible in the near future.

Call for applications for Herskovits Library Research Grants

Northwestern University Libraries and PAS established the Herskovits Library Research Grant program in 2021 to support projects that yield new lines of inquiry, interdisciplinary and multilayered research, and advanced scholarship on the diverse peoples and countries of Africa. Projects must emphasize the need for extensive on-site use of Northwestern's Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies.

Graduate and postgraduate students, assistant and associate professors (and equivalent), and independent researchers from the US or abroad who are not affiliated with Northwestern are eligible to apply. The grant may be awarded to an individual applicant, a team, or divided among multiple applicants and teams, and will reimburse expenses for transportation, accommodations, and meals for one or more visits to Northwestern. One or two grants of up to \$10,000 total may be awarded annually.

Applications must include

- 3–5 page description of the research project(s)
- curriculum vitae of the applicant(s)
- detailed budget indicating total amount requested and itemized list of projected costs for transportation, accommodations, meals, and other qualified expenses (see library.northwestern.edu/documents/allowable-expenses.pdf and library.northwestern.edu/visit/visitor-privileges/out-of-town.html)
- letter of recommendation from a referee qualified to judge the quality, feasibility, and significance of the proposal and the qualifications of the applicant(s)

Materials should be submitted as an email attachment to librarygrants@northwestern.edu. The recommendation letter should be emailed separately by the referee. The deadline to apply is April 1.

Community news

Marcos de Almeida (history '20) was awarded the history department's 2021 Perkin Prize for Best Dissertation for "Speaking of Slavery: Strategies and Moral Imagination in the Lower Congo, Early Times to the 19th Century."

Chernoh Bah (history graduate student) and coauthors published eight articles on corruption in Sierra Leone in the *Africanist Press* (africanistpress.com) last fall.

Colin Bos (history graduate student) was a winner of the history department's Henry Binford Prize for Best Teaching Team. He and his team took part in Helen Tilley's fall 2021 Biomedicine in World History class.

Bright Gyamfi (history graduate student) published the article "From Nkrumah's Black Star to the African Diaspora: Ghanaian Intellectual Activists and the Development of Black Studies in the Americas" in the *Journal of African American History* 106(4), fall 2021.

Lamin Keita (political science graduate student) was featured on the Graduate School Spotlight page in November.

The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel, edited by Leonardo A. Villaló and published in January, features the bylines of several Northwestern alumni: "French Colonialism and the Making of the Modern Sahel" by **Gregory Mann** (history PhD '00); "Islam and Muslim Societies in the Contemporary Sahel" by **Benjamin Soares** (anthropology PhD '97); and "Negotiating Secularism in the Sahel," by **Alexander Thurston** (religious studies PhD '13).

Marcia Tiede (Herskovits Library) gave the paper "From *Kotia-Nima* (1968) to *Nima, le fils du bonheur* (2018): The Crucible of Colonial Education as Reflected in Francophone West African Memoirs" at the virtual Mande Studies Conference hosted last fall by Uppsala University in Norway.

Send stories and news items to laray.denzer@northwestern.edu so that PAS can share them with the Africanist community at Northwestern and beyond.

Swahili corner



By Lila Wells

I came to Northwestern knowing I would study Swahili. I had informally studied the language for years, cultivating a genuine love for it and Swahili culture through my work with Unite the World with Africa Foundation (www.uniteafricafoundation.org), an international NGO operating in Tanzania, East Africa. I had learned elementary Swahili to converse with Unite's partners when I first became involved years earlier, at age 12. But my first quarter of Northwestern Swahili taught me more than all my years of Duolingo and YouTube tutorials combined.

The summer between my freshman and sophomore years, I participated in Unite's youth ambassador program, which emphasized academic excellence, mutual understanding, and building meaningful relationships

among 13 US and 23 Tanzanian A-Level and university students. Throughout that summer, my American and Tanzanian peers traded academic challenges and articles via WhatsApp and Zoom and discussed physics, philosophy, climate change, and coming of age. We conversed in English and Swahili, exchanging language lessons, songs, and stories of cultural relevance.

Throughout the program, our conversations veered into what we wanted to do with our lives—a deeply personal matter especially relevant to young adults on the brink of entering the real world. The American cohort had at least a year of college experience under their belts, and most of the Tanzanian cohort was in their final year of A-Level studies. Yet, as we talked about what I believed to be virtually everything under the sun, a unifying theme emerged: our collective investigation into the what we would do upon graduation—our next step. Finding our purpose was (and is) inherently tied to identifying and pursuing our passions. Often, knowing how to do so came down to one thing: our exposure to different possibilities.

This led us to the Unite Passion Project, an international speaker platform emphasizing career exposure

and showcasing the ways that various ideas and talents can be translated into meaningful, impactful, and rewarding work. I assembled a team of college students yet again for speaker outreach efforts in both English and Swahili, securing over 100 speaker contributors from all over the world. Their insights and experiences were (and are) shared with 1,300 students in Unite Clubs through seven Tanzanian A-Level schools. Northwestern faculty member Mwalimu Mwangi and visiting Fulbright scholar Nyanjala Maingu contributed to the platform, sharing their insights and lived experiences in Swahili for the Unite Club members.

Ultimately, my Northwestern Swahili studies have strengthened my grasp of the language and deepened my admiration for it. Language is a bridge for cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. Swahili epitomizes this in connecting over 150 million speakers across Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan. I've had incredible opportunities to meet and learn from young global leaders who I am proud to call my friends. The added opportunity for Swahili classroom study at Northwestern has been invaluable in preparing me to collaborate with these leaders to enact actionable change in the future.

Lila Wells is a junior double-majoring in sociology and legal studies. She is passionate about law and its effects on social institutions and the human experience.

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